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rather than any political alliance or opposition, which related the Ovimbundu as a whole to the Portuguese and the other tribes. Informants who remember 'the time of the rubber' talk about it with much more interest and much more detail than about any other aspect of the past, and it is far easier to make an ordered picture out of the narratives of the caravan journeys than to fill in the gaps in the descriptions of the political and kinship systems provided by Childs and Hastings.[57]

Politically the Ovimbundu were divided, as has been said, into several kingdoms. Bailundo, the largest of the kingdoms was divided, according to Childs into about 200 sub-chiefdoms. As it had about half a million inhabitants this would give an average population of about 2,500. While the kingdoms seem to have been more or less stable in number and boundaries from the end of the eighteenth century, the number of sub-chiefdoms seems to have increased. Thus an official Portuguese estimate made in 1799 gives Bailundo as having only 82 sub-chiefdoms, and Galangue, where Childs counted 112 sub-chiefdoms, as having 78. The sub-chiefdom paid tribute to the king, sent men for his armies, and recognised his court as the supreme arbitrator. Some sub-chiefdoms were held by ministers or relatives of the king.[58]

It is, however, not easy on the sparse detail available to decide how much autonomy the sub-chiefdoms really had. Gumba, the area where I worked, was a sub-chiefdom of the Bailundo kingdom, albeit on the north-western frontier, neighbouring Cassongue and Cela, where the people did not call themselves Va-Mbailundu, though their rulers acknowledged the suzerainty of the king of Bailundo. Old men told me of raids from Bailundo for slaves, but I cannot say if this was the result of the period of disorder mentioned, or whether sub-chiefdoms on the border of a kingdom gave only nominal submission and received only nominal protection. In the area where I worked,

[57] This is not intended as a personal reflection on Dr. Childs and the late Dr. Hastings, both of whom deserve the highest praise for their work and for their obvious devotion to the Ovimbundu. Hastings devoted far more space to the magico-religious field than to the kinship system. Likewise Childs's description of kinship is much shorter, much less detailed, and much less satisfactory than his account of childhood and adolescence, or the really outstanding historical chapter.

[58] Magyar, pp. 383-92; Childs, pp. 23-24.

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at least, the effective unit of law and self-defence was formerly the sub-chiefdom.[59]

In both sub-chiefdom and kingdom the chief (a term used here for both king and sub-chief) passed through a cycle of rites to become truly chief and was surrounded, assisted, and checked by titled ministers.[60] The future chief was selected from persons of chiefly stock. My informants stated that a new chief might be related either patrilineally or matrilineally to former chiefs; all other sources state that the chiefdom can only be held by somebody *patrilineally* of chiefly blood, with the exception of Santos Brandão writing on the Huambo kingdom.[61] The selection was the responsibility of the Mwekalia, whose role was to represent the people *vis-à-vis* the king, an opposition which is expressed in the Umbundu saying 'the chief is a guest, the Mwekalia is a man of the country'. When asked to explain this saying, the Ovimbundu point out that many chiefs come from outside the chiefdom, and also that 'If the chief does something wrong, we can send him away'.[62]

In such a constitutional deposition of the chief which nineteenth century observers describe as taking place fairly frequently,[63] the main responsibility fell on the Mwekalia. The cycle of royal rites consisted of the ceremonial entry of the chief into his capital and his taking of a new name, the rebuilding of certain shrines, a large-scale hunt, the building of an archway intended as a magical defence to the capital, and finally an act

[59] Informants.

[60] For the king and his ministers see especially Hastings, pp. 29–71 (based on Bailundo), and for other details of the royal court see Serpa Pinto, p. 167 (based on Bie).

[61] For references to patrilineal succession see Serpa Pinto, p. 159, Capello and Ivens, *From Benguella to the Territory of Yaca* (London, 1882), p. 81, Hastings, p. 42, Childs, p. 22. Santos Brandão (*Mensário Administrativo*, July–August, 1950) gives a list of the kings of Huambo where there had been two successive royal lines, and this shows several cases of succession by sisters' sons. (The Umbundu text he gives makes this quite clear.)

[62] The underlying idea is not so much that the chiefly stock is of immigrant descent but rather that the people of one chiefdom call somebody from outside to rule over them, who can be sent away if he misbehaves. Of course people living within a chiefdom are not excluded, but this point about the chief being a stranger is very strongly emphasized.

[63] Childs, pp. 22–23 and references given there.

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[1824-1911]

of ritual cannibalism (*oku lia ekongo*) after which he could not be deposed.[64]

Hastings in describing the principal ministers of the Bailundo court states that the Mwekalia and the Galamboli or Ngambole (whose function was to remember traditions) were representative of the indigenous pre-Jaga stock, the Kesongo who was the war leader was a slave from another tribe, and the Otjinduli was of immigrant stock, and points out that these represent the three sources from which the Ovimbundu sprang.[65]

At the sub-chiefdom level some of the titles found in the kingdoms would be found combined, and the chief's court, where cases were judged, was composed both of titled ministers living at the chief's village and of the village headmen (some of whom were also title-holders). The sub-chief represented his people to the outer world, led them in communal ritual and judged, with his councillors,[66] their disputes. Hastings describes a case thus: 'When all the members of the court are seated in a circle, with an empty space in the centre, the plaintiff's counsel then relates the case, after which the lawyer for the defendant does likewise for his side. The chief in turn makes general comments. Lusenje, the official, whose duty it is to keep order at court and to announce the speakers, then calls on the accuser to come forward and make his statement.'[67]

While the sub-chiefdom was the largest unit in which law and order reigned undisputed, there existed alliances and cross-cutting relationships providing a contact outside its area. There was the *tjisoko* alliance which existed between two sub-chiefdoms which were separated by a third. Gumba sub-chiefdom was thus allied to Ndjandju from which it was separated by Chicunda, and messengers from Gumba and Ndjandju travelled together to Bailundo once a year to carry tribute. Apparently a sub-chiefdom had only one *tjisoko* partner. The relationship was one of funeral friendship; *vakwatjisoko* (*tjisoko* partners) undertook the burial of those who died without kinsfolk and also ordinary

[64] This is based on information from Gumba. See also Magyar, pp. 270–77; Hastings, pp. 43–45; Childs p. 21.

[65] Hastings, p. 60.

[66] Informants.

[67] Hastings, pp. 148–49.

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CHAPTER III

CHIEFS AND HEADMEN IN GUMBA

1. *The History of Gumba*

The historical perspective of Ovimbundu is short. Few, even elders, know of any landmark earlier than the Mutu-ya-Kevela rising of 1902–3, nor even for those who had participated in it did the time of the rubber trade form a Golden Age by which the present is judged. The period about which most was remembered was the reign of Mbati.[1]

Mbati had ruled over both Gumba and Chicunda, a union which had existed only during his lifetime, and which would have given him on present-day population figures 7,500–9,000 subjects.[2] He had managed to keep in his own hands the relations between his people and the government post. Policemen arriving at his capital to recruit labourers were entertained while Mbati's ministers got together the men required. Although an upholder of the traditional rites associated with chieftancy he had been on good terms with the missionaries and allowed a Catholic catechist to settle in his village. One of his sons became a Protestant schoolteacher near the railway line, another entered the Catholic seminary but left and became a policeman in Cela. Many of the numerous progeny provided by his seventeen wives are still living in Gumba.

Mbati's downfall came through his practising the traditional annual ritual cannibalism (*oku lia ekongo*). About 1934–5 he was banished for this to another part of Umbundu country.

[text continues on p. 37]

[1] L. Magyar marks a place called Gumba on his map (opposite to page 1) but puts it to the south of the capital of Bailundo. As he does not seem to have personal knowledge of this area, this does not rule out identification, especially as the Cuvo begins to the south of Bailundo.

[2] For the basis of this estimate see section 2 of this chapter.

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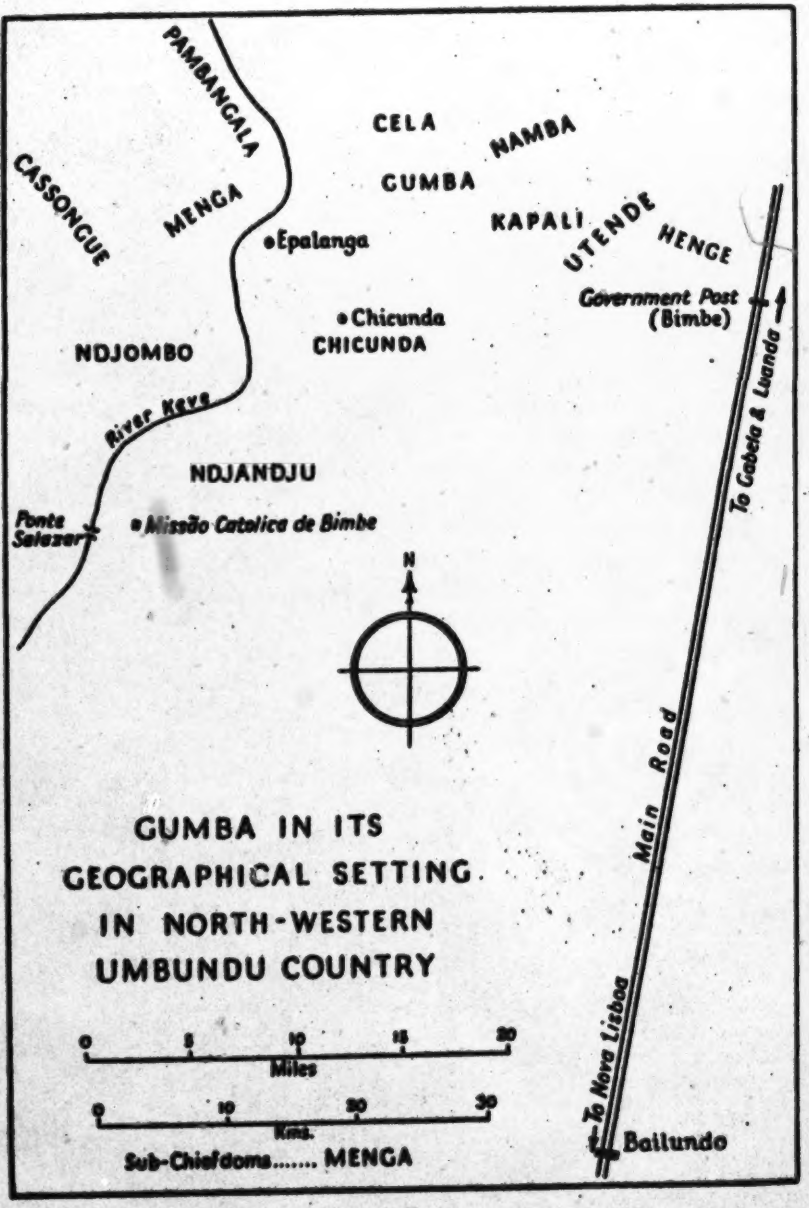

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Some ten years later he was allowed to return to Gumba but died on the way back.

His successor was Simbwyikoka, who was a mother's brother's son of Mbati, that is in Umbundu terminology a 'son'. Umbundu rules of succession allow anybody to succeed to a chiefdom who is paternally or maternally related to a previous chief, whether or not this relationship is genealogically traceable.[3]

Simbwyikoka was apparently nominated to act as regent during Mbati's absence, and as he did not complete the full cycle of chiefly rites he did not have quite the same prestige among the people as a chief in his own right who 'had finished', that is, had gone through all the rites. It was he who was the last ruler of Gumba to send the annual tribute in the form of a sack of fish to Bailundo, since it was a little after the time of his accession that Kandimba[4] (or Njahulu), the last of the Bailundo royal house to have any real authority over the kingdom, died.

Simbwyikoka had lived at the hamlet of Kamballa in Gumba. When he took up office he did not settle at Mbati's village of Katembo, but established, or rather re-established, as a previous chief had ruled there, his capital[5] on the top of the narrow ridge which cuts off the greater part of Gumba from access by road. It was not possible for many people to settle on this site. Accordingly Simbwyikoka encouraged people to settle at the foot of the ridge, swelling the population of an already existing village. This was called Mwekalia from the headman, who held the office of Mwekalia[6] another ministerial title associated with the chiefly court.

In 1938 Simbwyikoka was deposed by the *chefe* for shielding his dependents from the operation of 'contract labour' (administrative recruitment of non-voluntary labour). About 1944

[3] My informants. This means that within (and outside) any sub-chiefdom there are a number of potential heirs who in no way receive any special status or form any kind of corporate group from this fact.

[4] Reigned at Bailundo 1911–35. Childs, p. 229

[5] In Umbundu Ombala, often transcribed in Portuguese as Embala.

[6] For the role of Mwekalia see Hastings, p. 59. His statement that the office is matrilineally inherited was not confirmed by my informants. It seems that it can be inherited either patrilineally or matrilineally. The man who was known as Mwekalia and had been headman of the village of that name did not function as such at the chief's court during my stay. A kinsman of his, Ngombe, acted as Mwekalia at the court of Lunase.

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173 634 166 Simbwyikoka founded a new village known by his name. In 1951 one of his sons, Sassungu, founded a new village Sassungu whose population originated with a group of people from his father's village. Simbwyikoka maintained contact with Kamballa, where another son, Felisi, lived and herded Simbwyikoka's cattle.

173 634 [648] The new chief was Kakope, a son of Tjiweka who had been chief of Gumba at the time of the Muta-ya-Kevela rising. He held office for only two years, being deposed by the *chefe* since ill-health made monthly visits to the post difficult for him. He was succeeded by Kafelo, who came to Gumba from Cassongue across the river. Kafelo was a cross-cousin of Mbati and paternal kinsman of Kakope. Having gone through the cycle of chiefly rites, and undertaken Mbati's funeral he was regarded as being fully chief, in a way that Simbwyikoka was not.

The Epalanga[7] of a chief is a minister chosen from among the chief's kin. Kafelo had nominated to this post Sapapula, a matrilateral 'brother' of his and an inhabitant of Menga. Sapapula moved into Gumba and founded the village of [166] Epalanga in 1945–6, where he was joined by various kinsmen. I have heard the foundation of Epalanga ascribed to another man, Mwehombo, who will be mentioned again, and should therefore be introduced. Mwehombo had been minister at the court of Mbati, his mother's brother. After Mbati's death Mwehombo had stayed at Katembo till 1941, when he settled in Menga with his kinsman Sapapula. Mwehombo crossed over to Gumba in 1944.[8]

173 634 640 In 1954 Kafelo was deposed by the *chefe*, as Kafelo had been drunk in his presence. Kutenga Lusase, who had in 1945 founded the village of Kamupa, saw his chance and told the *chefe* that he had been chosen chief according to custom. The people of Gumba did not complain about this to the post, as they were afraid of the consequences. Kutenga Lusase claimed to be related to Mbati and Simbwyikoka and was a matrilateral 'grandson' of Tjiweka. He was not related to Kafelo whose link to Tjiweka was a patrilateral one.

Kutenga Lusase was in his turn deposed by the *chefe* in 1956

[7] Hastings, p. 53.

[8] Information from his 'brother', Luanga.

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for lack of effectiveness following a series of quarrels. His successor was Tjilombo a government headman and the leading personality of the village of Tjisangu. Such, then, is the recent history of Gumba.

2. *Chiefs, Government Headmen, and Traditional Headmen*

I have outlined the succession of chiefs in Gumba, and the villages with which they were associated. I have noted that nowadays there are government headmen as well as the traditional headmen. I wish now to indicate what authority the chiefs and the two sorts of headmen have and how this is related to the villages.

The sub-chiefdom is a recognized administrative unit. The census, and the annual check on the census, are taken on a sub-chiefdom basis, as are the collection of taxes and the recruitment of workers for contract labour, road work, and jobs to be done at the post. The sub-chief and the government headmen have to visit the post once a month. The *chefe de posto* (head of post = District Officer) will normally only visit each sub-chiefdom once a year for the check on the census. He may send orders for the recruitment of labourers or the arrest of an offender by one of the policemen who live at the post. His principal contact with the people comes in the adjudicating of disputes which the people are quite ready to carry to the post—the Bimbe *chefe*, whose area included Gumba, told me that hearing cases was his main occupation. Very few *chefes* have anything more than a smattering of the Umbundu language, and they have only the vaguest knowledge of the culture and social usages—for instance they may be aware of the classificatory extension of kinship terms and the association of leopardskins with chieftancy. The *chefes* are moved about fairly frequently and their names and personalitie are not known to the people. As the people associate the post with demands for taxes, fines, and labour services, and are only likely to visit the post when recruited as non-voluntary labourers or to have their photographs taken for identity cards, it is not surprising that fear is the predominant emotion they feel towards the *chefe*.

The staff of the post consists of the interpreter, an African

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634 648 with primary and possibly some secondary education, the clerks who have primary schooling, and the policemen, who are often illiterate. The police are locally recruited and are provided with their keep, from the farm attached to the post, and with uniforms. They are usually—by no means always—illiterate. The interpreter, clerks, and police tend to identify themselves with the *chefe* as against the people; however, a policeman may be influenced in his relations with the villagers by gifts and friendship.

634 161 The size of population of sub-chiefdoms varies. The 1950 census gave the total 'non-civilized' population of the Bailundo *concelho* as being 246,045, and the number of sub-chiefdoms as 82,[9] that is, an average of 3,000 individuals per sub-chiefdom. The *chefe* of Bimbe told me in August 1956 that Gumba had 800 taxpayers, and Chicunda had 700. Putting the proportion of taxpayers as 1 to 6 (on the basis of Epalanga proportions) this gives 4,800 as the population figure for Gumba and 4,200 as the figure for Chicunda. Even if the proportion of 1 to 5 be taken as the proportion between taxpayers and total population this gives us 4,000 as the figure for Gumba and 3,500 as the figure for Chicunda. I do not know what the local density of population is; in the Bailundo *concelho* as a whole it is 16–17 individuals per square kilometre.[10]

634 648 622 The chief and government headmen are the main channel of conveying demands and orders from the post to the villagers. They receive in return the remission of their taxes. Their dependence on the post is not, however, sufficient to give them a position of marked superiority in their locality for the following reasons. They are unable to control all relations between the post and the people; anybody who has a dispute on hand may take it direct to the post. In village life their influence can always be counterbalanced by that of the catechists and 'elders of the school' whose contact with the missions is much closer than that of the chiefs and government headmen with the post. They also lack economic resources; the exemption from taxes (which the Catholic catechists share)

[9] See Gálvao and Selvagem, pp. 384–3. For Angolan population density see Egerton, pp. 36–37.

[10] My own estimate from figures given by Galvão and Selvagem.

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does not give them any claim to financial assistance from the people, or control over natural resources, such as land rights. The only prerogative of this sort that the chief has is the right to the leg of an antelope killed in a hunt or a bull killed in a commemoration rite—and this is of symbolic rather than economic importance.

Nor, finally, does the post give the chiefs prestige and support.[11] Five successive chiefs of Gumba had been deposed by the post, and it is not uncommon for chiefs and government headmen to be beaten or otherwise punished (for instance by being made to work for a fortnight at the post) for their shortcomings. They have in fact just sufficient power to carry out the commands of the *chefe* and to do nothing more. They are not disliked by the local people for doing what the *chefe* tells them to do, but any attempt at dictatorial behaviour on their part will stir up opposition which may lead to their downfall.

The relations between white *chefe* and black chief vary according to individuals and neighbourhoods. Sometimes the *chefe* will allow the chief to be chosen according to tradition; at other times he will impose a candidate of his own. A *chefe* may hear any cases that are brought to the post, or he may delegate the power of hearing minor cases to the chiefs. Some *chefes* will regard the chiefs with hostility as being enemies of their own people; others will abstain under any circumstances from beating a chief, as they feel their power should be supported. Here I describe the situation as it was in Gumba and in Bimbe generally.

A visit to a chief's village in Gumba or elsewhere will give an opportunity of meeting those residents who hold the ministerial titles, of gazing under overshadowing trees at the enclosure in which are kept the skulls of former chiefs, and perhaps of seeing the chief and some of his cronies dance to a drum in commemoration of one of his predecessors. Ministers, skulls, dances, and drum are symbols of chiefly nostalgia rather than of political power. The ceremonies have little interest for the people in general, and many of them have been abandoned by the chief. Lusase's first wife had not, as custom demanded,

[11] For criticism of this policy by two Portuguese with administrative experience see Galvão and Selvagem, p. 913.

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become *inakulu* (queen) because she feared the unpleasant haunting by the spirits of former queens which is traditionally experienced by the holder of this office.[12] On one occasion Lusase himself offered to let me into the *akokoto* (the enclosure where the skulls of dead chiefs were kept) for the payment of five or ten escudos (1s. 3d. or 2s. 6d.) although the entry of anybody except the chief and possibly certain of his courtiers appears traditionally to have been forbidden under the penalty of death sent by the spirits. Even the surviving rites are confined to the chief's village; the first-fruits ceremony in which the whole chiefdom was involved disappeared a number of years ago. The association general in Umbundu country between the chiefs and paganism does not provide an added ritual sanction to the chief's power, but rather links him with what is felt to be a dying past, essentially unimportant, at the present day.

The chief may also have some of his time occupied with hearing cases. A good many minor disputes are solved by local adjudication, but there seems to be no specific division between cases that ought to come to the chief and those which can be arbitrated by somebody else. Elders from outside a chiefdom may be invited to adjudicate on a particular case. The old formality of legal procedure has largely disappeared, probably because all disputes at a local level can be carried to the post—hence any ruling by chief or elders is essentially dependent on its acceptance by the disputants.

Accusations of sorcery are rather different from other cases since the post does not believe them, although such an accusation is not in itself punishable. Sometimes suspected sorcerers are accused at the post of 'poisoning'.[13] Lusase told me that convicted sorcerers were fined a chicken, a goat and a pig. Gregorio, the chief of Menga, at first said, when I asked about this, that it was not possible to know who was a sorcerer. When, rather to his surprise, I mentioned the traditional basket test, he agreed and explained that people convicted by this test were sent as labourers to the post to satisfy whatever demand was being made for workers.

[12] Informants. See also Hastings, p. 49.

[13] Childs, p. 58.

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The tasks of recruiting contract labourers and road-workers and of getting fines and taxes paid, and such other duties as the arranging of compulsory purchase of tickets for the travelling cinema (showing patriotic films) are carried out through a long process of argument, attempted evasion, and pressure, between the chief, the government headmen, and the locally influential people, traditional headmen, catechists, and anyone else who can get himself listened to. Persons actually picked for contract labour or road work may make quite a fuss about it, but as such numbers are recruited it is ultimately accepted resignedly. It is not really practicable for a chief to discriminate in favour of his kinsman owing to the heavy demands for labour and the likelihood of such discrimination being reported at the post, as happened to Simbwyikoka. Demands for labour may fall heavily on some households. Thus one Epalanga household consisted of a man, his daughter by an earlier marriage, his wife and her baby daughter. The man had been taken for contract labour, his wife had been called to road work, and the adolescent daughter was carrying sisal[14] to the post. A kinsman of the household head attempted to arrange for some watch to be kept over the gardens lest animals should get in.

There were four government headmen in Gumba during my stay. Theoretically they are village headmen. The villages in which official records group Ovimbundu do not conform to the actual villages in which Ovimbundu live. Anybody moving from one village to another has to pay a fee; as the Ovimbundu move about quite frequently and no attempt is made to enforce this rule locally, the result is this discrepancy between paper and real villages.

The government headman's duties are those already described for the chief. As with the chief, there is only sufficient backing from the post for him to carry out the orders he receives; he does not receive power to enable him to exercise political leadership and judicial authority at the local level, nor is he a representative of the post in the villages. His interests and values are linked to those of his neighbours rather than to the post. It is through the chief and the government headmen

[14] Some villages are obliged to grow sisal and take it to the post without payment.

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that the administration gets labour and money from the villagers, and largely though not exclusively through them that the villagers keep in touch with the post which politically integrates them into Angola and legally provides sanctions which they do not possess. The government headmen do not supervise on behalf of the post the daily life of their fellow-villagers. The government laws—such as the prohibition of beer- and rum-brewing and grass-burning (for hunts)—which if enforced would bring about a certain number of changes in Umbundu social life, are not enforced for many reasons—the administration makes no real attempt to suppress these uses as opposed to levying annual fines[15] per head, the government headmen go in for these customs themselves, and they lack the power to achieve this enforcement. Were the government to introduce policies involving some reorganization of the social life they would need a stronger form of local authority. Under the present circumstances, however, the powers and status of the chief and government headmen are quite consistent with the demands made on them by the post.

There were four government headmen in Gumba in 1955–6, Guilherme, Lupassa, Tjilombo (who became chief after the deposition of Lusase), and Walivanga. Guilherme was in 1955 living in Epalanga. Some people thought he should live in Kamupa which had been founded by his mother's brother Lusase—however, when he left Epalanga in 1956 he settled near the Protestant village of Kalungwengwe. His change of residence had been the result of violent quarrels with Paulo and other Epalanga people. Lupassa lived in Katembo, and was a sister's son of Kaluywa, who was the traditional headman. I do not think Lupassa was the dominating personality in Katembo. Tjilombo was on the other hand the leading personality in Tjisangu, many of its people being related to him. Walivanga was similarly linked by kin or affinal ties to the majority of the people of Belem.

The foregoing paragraph raises the question of the relationship of the government headman to the traditional headmen. A man who is both a government headman and a traditional headman is in a fairly strong position in his village; when the

[15] Each fine is about 10–20 escudos (2/6d.–5/-).

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for individuals to build up large villages—thus Simbwyikoka encouraged people to settle at Mwekalia to make it a large village. It may also be suggested that the power of the village headmen was to some extent linked with the power of the chief, since the headmen were associated politically with the chief, and would from this, tend to gain authority in their dealings with their fellow villagers. The village headmen also lacked any real competition from other types of leadership. Mbati had kept relations with the post in his own hands, and there were therefore no government headmen. The first catechist had arrived in Mbati's village in 1928, but cannot have met with much lasting success as there are few baptized Christians over thirty-five in Gumba.

Other factors at the time strengthening the position of the village headmen were the low rate of labour migration[18] and the fact that practically every man over forty at the time of Simbwyikoka's accession had participated in the rubber trade. This meant that many of the best known caravan leaders were still in full vigour, and enjoyed a prestige based on the first-hand knowledge of the middle-aged and older men.

Between this period of the middle thirties and the beginning of my own fieldwork twenty years had passed and many changes had taken place. The status of the chief had sharply declined and he was now assisted by the four government headmen. Every village except the chief's village had a Catholic or Protestant catechist, and there had been a marked trend towards learning catechism in preparation for baptism, which had begun about 1946. Hence the catechetical school was usually attended by the majority of under twenty-five's in the village.

Agnatic kinship had ceased to be the principle of village membership. Nor can it be said that headmen build up villages by getting people to settle at a particular spot. It is not always easy even to find the headman, village population is not very stable, and a man can settle with any category of kin.

To discover the traditional headman required careful phrasing of questions. When I visited a village and asked for the *osekulu yimbo* (the traditional phrase for the village headman) I

[18] Ibid., p. 214.

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houses, coffee plants and so on there is little likelihood of disputes arising about the inheritance of land claims. A woman's property should be given to her sisters, after her children have had their cut. In one case a man inherited his sister's debts but allowed her children to inherit her property, 'lest they be sad'. A wife's fields return to her husband.

Inheritance is then a process by which the relations of certain kin, both sons and sister's sons, with the deceased are recognized by the transmission of his property. As with other aspects of Umbundu kinship, while the existence of the kinship tie provides the basis on which to found a relationship, its content is determined by the nature of the contacts between the individuals involved and the services given.

Although there is a definite tendency for men of chiefly stock to have longer pedigrees than other individuals there is no chiefly genealogy. When Paulo, the elder of the school of Epalanga, told me that had he not been blind he might have been chief of Gumba, he quoted the names of four chiefs to whom he was related. The chieftancy is not tied to a lineage, but can be held by any individual who can claim links with a former chief or chiefs. People 'of the blood of the chiefs' in no sense form a differentiated group of aristocrats significant in social life.

In similar fashion membership of the spirit-linked professions and of certain cults seems to have been a matter of succession of one individual to the role of another.[20] Membership of the hunting and smithing professions descended patrilineally, but if a hunter or smith had no son his position could be succeeded to by a daughter's son.[21]

7. *Kinship in a Changing Society*

From this, and from other chapters, a picture of Umbundu kinship may emerge as something so blurred, confused, and confusing, as hardly to merit the term 'kinship system', yet at

[20] I.e. rather than admission to a corporate group of hunters. A man can inherit his father's hunting spirit before the latter's death; in Epalanga Batista had received the hunting spirit of his father Epalata.

[21] My informants were not agreed as to whether a sister's son could inherit in default of a son.

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having been elected according to traditional rules. Lusase was angry at this, turned up at the ceremony, and attacked Sapapula.

The following morning Epalanga buzzed with indignation. Gregorio, the chief of Menga, and Mandumba, Sapapula's son, had arrived at Epalanga to express their support, and Gregorio asked me[9] to write a letter to the Mission to get its support against Lusase at the post. I said that I would go to the chief's village to persuade Lusase to seek a reconciliation. The elder Wasuka, a cross-cousin of Sapapula, declared that even if Lusase offered five cattle in compensation they would not be accepted, and Sapapula's supporters portrayed him as a much injured man, repeatedly the victim of the Guilherme, Kapapelo, Lusase, Ndonga clique. My offer to go to the chief's village fell through when we heard that Lusase was now no longer there, but near, apparently at Simbwyikoka's.

I suggested that the moot should be held at Simbwyikoka's since the case had begun there; the others said 'No, let him come over here.' The crowd settled down in the open space before my house. News was then brought to us that Lusase refused to come over and insisted on the people coming to him, declaring that he ruled all, and did not obey the anthropologist but only the *chefe*. Accordingly everybody got up and walked over to Simbwyikoka's. Here we leant that Lusase had fled. Kambungo[10], an elder of Menga and kinsmen of Sapapula, declared that somebody who behaved like this could not be chief. Gregorio the chief of Menga became involved in an argument with Ndonga, who he said was responsible for installing Lusase. This Ndonga denied. This, incidentally, was the first time that I had heard that Lusase was not properly elected. As previously noted on the fall of Kafelo, Lusase had arrived at the post and announced himself as being the new chief. The Gumba people did not protest about this for fear of possible reactions from the post.

It now became known that Lusase could not be found.

[9] It may be suggested that my interventions were not in accordance with anthropological etiquette. It is difficult to see what else I could have done; it is, after all, the local custom for 'civilized' persons to provide letters of recommendation, and a refusal on my part would not have been understood.

[10] He has been mentioned in Chapter V.

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People said that he had fled to the house of his sister's son Guilherme en route for the post; Gregorio now said to me that Lusase had made advances to Nahoka, trying to seduce her by saying that Sapapula was old. 627

On the same day Sapapula left for the post with, as his witnesses, Nahoka and Wasuka carrying a letter of recommendation from me. At the post the *chefe* took his part and told Lusase 'Sapapula is your father' and made Lusase kneel down to seek pardon. Sapapula said that he wished to move across the river into Menga, where he had formerly lived. The *chefe* told him to stay at Epalanga (because of the anthropologist's presence there), but transferred Epalanga administratively from Gumbaa to Chicunda. This settlement pleased the Epalanga people. It may be added that had Sapapula actually crossed over, a number of householders, including Paulo, would not have followed him. 648 631

Despite the *chefe's* acts it was not certain whether the change was to be given effect immediately or only after the *chefe's* annual visit; hence some more wrangling took place over the question of where Epalanga was situated for such purposes as the payment of fines for rum-brewing.

Luanga, who shared with Sapapula the title of Epalanga, came to my house on the night of the 27th June to ask for a letter to the *chefe de posto*. He told me that Lusase wanted to take away his title of Epalanga and send him to contract (non-voluntary) labour. I suggested that we should go together to see Lusase at his village on the following day. The next morning he decided not to go to the chief but to go straight to the post with his wife Adriana. He told me that when Lusase became chief in 1954, he and his 'brother' Mwehombo had bought the title of Epalanga (held under Kafelo by Sapapula) which they held jointly. Luanga had paid for this two pigs equal to 1,000 escudos (about £12. 10s. in British currency) and other things as well. Luanga's motive was not political power (which the present-day chief lacks and of which his ministers have even less) nor prestige, but because he would thus be exempt from contract labour. Luanga said that he did not mind going to contract labour, but insisted on having back what he had paid to Lusase. I said I would write a letter to say that he should not 578 631 648 634

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go to contract labour and accordingly he left for the post with my letter.

Luanga returned quite satisfied a few days later, the *chefe* having decided in his favour. Two days later he went to the 578 chief's village to complain of Lusase's actions. With him came 631 Bartolomeu and Paulo. Ngombe, as Mwekalia, and thereby responsible for the relations between chief and people, acted as the presiding figure, more chairman than judge, although he spoke for some time on the case. Lusase defended himself by saying that it was not he but somebody else who had recommended Luanga for contract labour. This explanation was accepted by Luanga. Bartolomeu and Paulo received small sums of money from Lusase for acting as witnesses, and later Luanga left with Lusase for another village. Here they effected the succession of a man to his father's title of Mbesi (another ministerial position). Luanga was much pleased with his share of the fee.

578 Not only the personalities but many of the features of previous 627 cases reappear here. Of the ways of acting which people choose, 648 Ndonga and Lusase use self-help, Ndonga to recover a debt, and Lusase to uphold his prestige. Against Lusase, as against Kapapelo, a moot was formed. Lusase like Guilherme insisted on his responsibility to the post alone, when the opposition seemed to be using a 'civilized' person of a different category. Final decisions are obtained by appeals to the post but the risky nature of such procedures is shown by the desire to get a letter of recommendation. Luanga believed that Lusase had got him sent to contract labour just as Francisco believed (correctly) that Guilherme had got him recruited. Ngombe as Mwekalia is more successful here as arbitrator than in the moot at Kapapelo's. Finally we see the contrast again between the survival of formal recognition in symbol of the prestige of chieftancy (the episode of the bull's leg) and its actual impotence caught between *chefe* and people. The specific issue in this dispute turns on a conflict between a chief and his people, and it shows how a chief can be defeated in the same way that the first dispute showed a government headman being defeated.

627 Lusase's opponents had, as previously, other means of influ- 648 encing the post. Gregorio had proposed getting a letter from the

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mission to give Sapapula's case, and, as things worked out, it was the anthropologist who was made the 'civilized' focus for the opposition to Lusase as Antonio Pires had been made the focus of the opposition to Guilherme. Lusase, like Guilherme, reacted by saying that he owed allegiance only to the *chefe de poste*, and running off to the post.

Luanga's case shows how desire to get out of contract labour may give a new reason for taking a ministerial title, and also once again how sending someone to contract labour is regarded as a means of injuring those whom one dislikes.

I have spoken of the conflict between Lusase and Sapapula as being a conflict between a chief and his people, and this is true in so far as it shows how opposition forms against a chief and how he can be checked. It is therefore of importance as indicating the position of the chief in the contemporary social system. The people themselves interpreted the dispute as being essentially one between individuals—Lusase's behaviour was attributed to his lust for Nahoka, and Gregorio entered the dispute not as the ruler of the neighbouring chiefdom of Menga but as a friend of Sapapula. The interpretation of what is a political conflict as a quarrel between individuals may be explained as being due to the relatively limited nature of the role of chief (Lusase) and of traditional headman (Sapapula) which therefore do not predominate in the social status of the individual. (In this particular case, had I got Lusase's viewpoint he would probably have said that he was defending his dignity as chief, whereas Sapapula did not regard Lusase as being really chief.) The lack of a formal court system or even of an articulated political system at the local level has brought into desuetude the old legal and political idioms and the Ovimbundu have not yet learnt new terms from the Portuguese.

5. *Social Control and Social Structure in the Disputes*

I now return to the points mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. It is hardly necessary to underline the decayed state of the traditional system of authority. Lusase had, at the time of the quarrel between Guilherme and Paulo, expressed his

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intention of staying out of the dispute, just in the same way as he said, when Ndonga's action was reported to him, that he did not know what went on in the villages. That is, Lusase disclaimed any general responsibility for maintaining law and order in the sub-chiefdom. He had turned up at the case before Justino and at the moot by Kapapelo's house, when Nahoka had pointed out that it was he, and not Kafelo, who was effectively chief. The very fact that such a remark could be made indicates a weakness in Lusase's position, and his lack of authority is further illustrated by his being but one of a crowd of would-be conciliators.

It was, indeed, Lusase's position with relation to Kafelo that brought about his quarrel with Sapapula. Lusase, on meeting Kafelo at Kapapelo's, had bowed to him, and must have been uneasily aware that public opinion held that Kafelo 'had finished', had completed the cycle of chiefly rites, whereas Lusase was just 'the *chefe de posto's* boy'. It is unlikely that there would be among the Ovimbundu developed forms of the situation reported from some colonial areas by which one person acts as chief or headman *vis-à-vis* the government while another is the real chief or headman with effective power over the people, if only because so much of the content of chieftancy today is simply post work. Yet a chief differs from a government headman precisely because of the surviving prestige which clings to the capital village, the skulls of the dead chiefs, the titled ministers, and the drums, and it was such an expression of prestige which Sapapula gave to Kafelo and denied to Lusase. Not surprisingly Lusase reacted to this sharp evidence of the weakness of his position. In acting as he did, he made things worse; since he lacked any local means of imposing his will by force, or mobilizing moral support, he had to fall back on the post.

This weakening of the chieftancy is, of course, only part of the general disintegration of the old social system. Sapapula, in personality and prestige, was the equal of any traditional headman in the neighbourhood, and was consulted by the chief and government headmen when fines or roadworkers were required from Epalanga. Yet it was Paulo and not Sapapula who launched the attack on Guilherme, an attack speedily supported